STARBLAZER

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No. 12

12p
AUS 40c NZ

The WEB of ARCON

RECONNAISSANCE SHIPS PATROLLED THE DARK RECESSES OF THE GALAXY. AS THESE SHIPS WERE LARGELY AUTOMATIC THE CREW SPENT LONG PERIODS DOING NOTHING. BOREDOM SET IN—AND SOME PEOPLE TOOK TERRIBLE RISKS TO RELIEVE THE BOREDOM. ON HIS FIRST DEEP SPACE TRIP WAS THE NEWLY COMMISSIONED LIEUTENANT JANUS. . .

The WEB of ARCON
IN THE REST ROOM A GAME OF CARDS WAS ABOUT TO BECOME MORE THAN A GAME.

YOU'RE CHEATING, SPENCER! NO ONE CAN BE THAT LUCKY!
DON'T BE STUPID, BISHOP.

PACK IT IN, YOU TWO! IF THE SKIPPER CATCHES YOU . . .

AT THAT MOMENT, THE CAPTAIN ENTERED.
COOL IT, BOTH OF YOU, OR I'LL HAVE YOU BOTH SPACEWALKING BACK TO THE MAIN FLEET!
YES, SIR.
YOU CAN'T REALLY BLAME THEM, SIR. THEY'D RATHER BE WITH THE FLEET. IT'S THE FLEET THAT VISIT THE PLANETS WE LOCATE.
I KNOW, JANUS. BUT OUR JOB IS TO MAKE SURE THE INHABITANTS AREN'T HOSTILE.
I'M HERE TO PICK UP SPACE EXPERIENCE—BUT WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS? PERHAPS THEY'RE NOT UP TO MAIN MISSION STANDARDS.

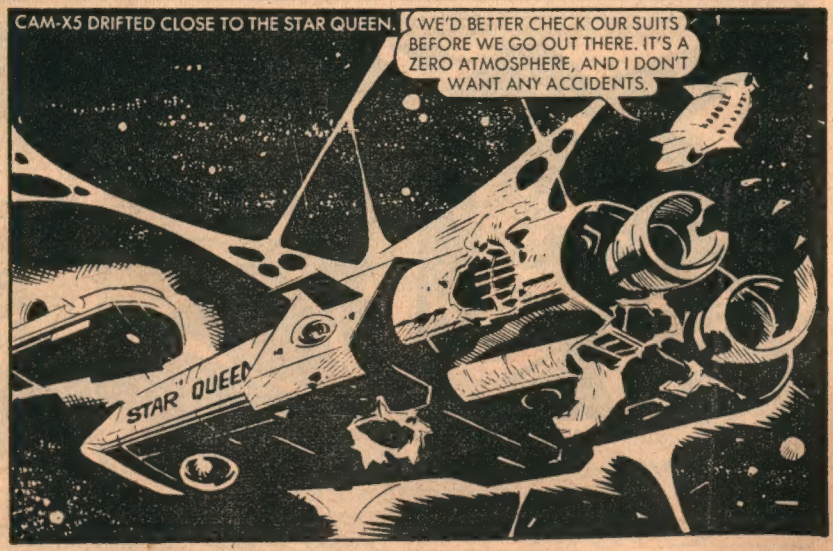
LESS THAN 0·2 SPACIALS LATER.
LONG-RANGE SENSORS HAVE PICKED UP SOME OBJECTS DRIFTING IN SPACE—RANGE 5123·17.
THEY'RE NOT ASTEROIDS, SIR. INSTRUMENTS INDICATE SPACE VEHICLES.
LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF GALACTIC SPACE PARK.
BIO-SENSORS INDICATE NO LIFE-SIGNS ABOARD ANY OF THOSE CRATES.

THOSE STRANDS HOLDING THEM TOGETHER—COULD BE LIFE-LINES OR TOWING CABLES.
STAR QUEEN
THE STAR QUEEN. THAT'S A TERRAN SHIP!
THE NAME RINGS A BELL. BUT IT COULDN'T BE!

THE CAPTAIN ASKED THE COMPUTER FOR INFORMATION ON THE STAR QUEEN.
TERRAN CONFEDERATION STARSHIP. DISAPPEARED 100 YEARS AGO. ONE OF THE FIRST TO USE THE ION-DRIVE ENGINE. PROTOTYPES WERE UNSTABLE. ASSUMED SHE HAD BLOWN UP WHEN CONTACT WAS LOST.

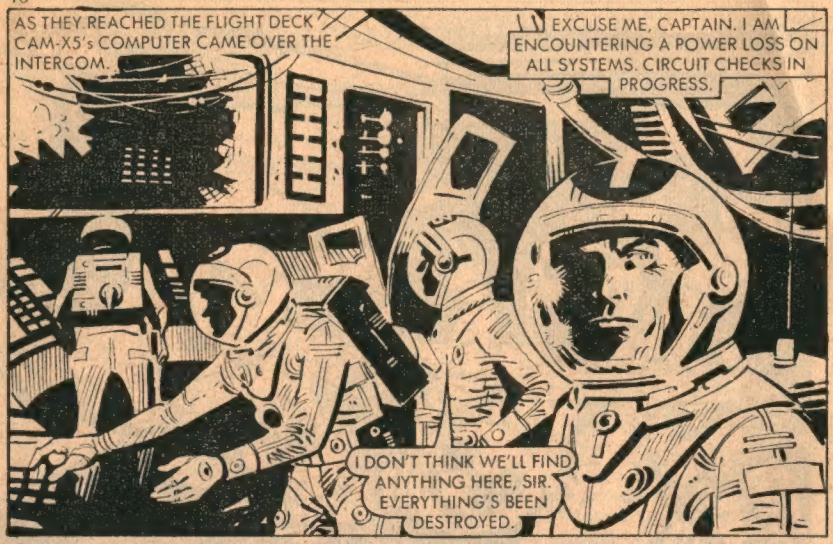
WE CAN SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT AND FIND OUT WHAT REALLY HAPPENED, SIR.
HOW ABOUT IT, SKIPPER? BY THE TIME THE MAIN FLEET GETS HERE THOSE SHIPS WILL HAVE DRIFTED OUT OF THIS GALAXY.

OKAY! BUT WE'D BETTER MAKE IT QUICK. WE'VE STILL GOT A MISSION TO RUN.
I'LL LOCK OUR NAVIGATION SYSTEM ONTO THAT SHIP OUT THERE, SKIPPER. THE COMPUTER CAN DO THE REST.


CAM-X5 DRIFTED CLOSE TO THE STAR QUEEN.
WE'D BETTER CHECK OUR SUITS BEFORE WE GO OUT THERE. IT'S A ZERO ATMOSPHERE, AND I DON'T WANT ANY ACCIDENTS.
STAR QUEEN

ON BOARD THE STAR QUEEN, MANY BODIES DRIFTED SILENTLY IN THE HOLD.
WHAT WENT ON IN HERE?
ALL DEAD! WHAT HAPPENED?

THAT'S NO METEOR DAMAGE! THAT WALL'S BEEN PEELED BACK LIKE A BANANA!
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE REST OF YOU, BUT THIS PLACE IS GIVING ME THE CREEPS.
LET'S CHECK THE FLIGHT DECK. PERHAPS SOMETHING'S LEFT ON TAPE.


AS THEY REACHED THE FLIGHT DECK CAM-X5's COMPUTER CAME OVER THE INTERCOM.
EXCUSE ME, CAPTAIN. I AM ENCOUNTERING A POWER LOSS ON ALL SYSTEMS. CIRCUIT CHECKS IN PROGRESS.
I DON'T THINK WE'LL FIND ANYTHING HERE, SIR. EVERYTHING'S BEEN DESTROYED.

I'M PICKING SOMETHING UP ON MY SENSOR, SKIPPER!

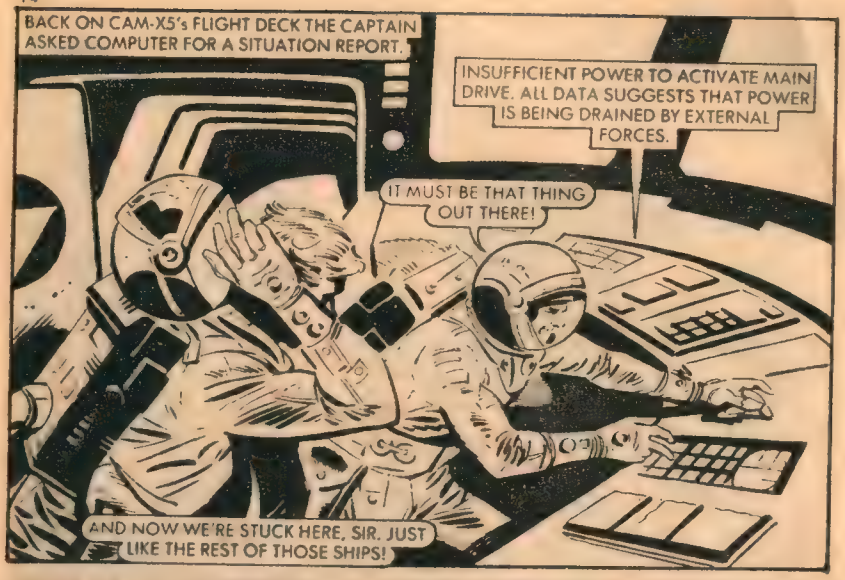
OKAY, DON'T PANIC. LET'S GET BACK TO THE SHIP.

SUDDENLY THE HULL WAS PEELED OPEN.
HELP ME!
SUFFERING SATURN! WHAT IS THAT?

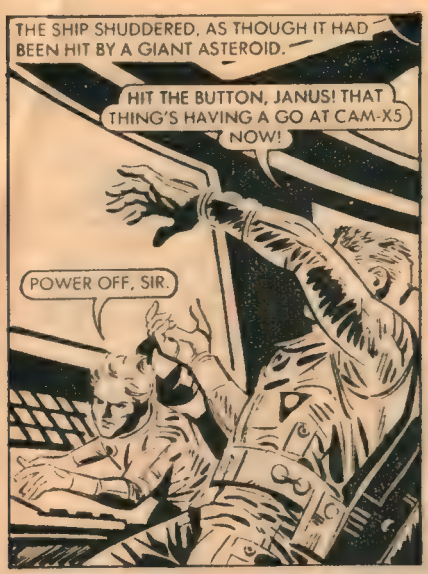
BISHOP'S LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEM WAS CRUSHED.
DRAW LASERS! FULL POWER!
BLAST THAT THING!
THE CONCENTRATED POWER OF THREE LASERS BLASTED AT THE CREATURE
IT'S NOT HAVING ANY EFFECT!
IMPOSSIBLE! THESE THINGS CAN CUT THROUGH SOLID ROCK!
LOOK OUT! HERE IT COMES!

STA
WE'VE GOT TO SAVE HIM!
IT'S TOO LATE, JANUS! THAT BLOW RIPPED HIS SUIT OPEN. WE'LL BE THE NEXT, UNLESS WE CAN GET BACK TO THE SHIP AND AWAY FROM HERE.

AS THEY RACED TOWARDS THE STAR QUEEN'S AIR LOCK.
POWER LOSS NOW APPROACHING CRITICAL!! AM SWITCHING TO EMERGENCY BACK-UP SYSTEMS.
CAM-X 5
THAT'S ALL WE NEED!


BACK ON CAM-X5's FLIGHT DECK THE CAPTAIN ASKED COMPUTER FOR A SITUATION REPORT.
INSUFFICIENT POWER TO ACTIVATE MAIN DRIVE. ALL DATA SUGGESTS THAT POWER IS BEING DRAINED BY EXTERNAL FORCES.
IT MUST BE THAT THING OUT THERE!
AND NOW WE'RE STUCK HERE, SIR. JUST LIKE THE REST OF THOSE SHIPS!

I SUGGEST A TOTAL SHUT-DOWN TO CONSERVE REMAINING ENERGY.
THAT MAKES SENSE. BETTER PUT YOUR HELMET BACK ON, JANUS.


THE SHIP SHUDDERED, AS THOUGH IT HAD BEEN HIT BY A GIANT ASTEROID.
HIT THE BUTTON, JANUS! THAT THING'S HAVING A GO AT CAM-X5 NOW!
POWER OFF, SIR.

AN EERIE SILENCE DESCENDED OVER THE SHIP.
THAT CREATURE OUT THERE CAN LOCATE ANY MAJOR SOURCE OF POWER. IT PROBABLY LIVES ON ENERGY.
NO WONDER OUR LASERS WERE USELESS.

HOW CAN ANYTHING SURVIVE OUT THERE IN SPACE? THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
SNAP OUT OF IT! WE'VE GOT SOME THINKING TO DO—WITHOUT A COMPUTER. IT'S GOING TO TAKE TWO CLEAR HEADS!

CAM-X5 WAS FITTED WITH A LIFEBOAT.

THE LIFEBOAT ENGINE HASN'T BEEN USED YET, SO THAT THING'S HAD NO CHANCE TO DRAIN IT.

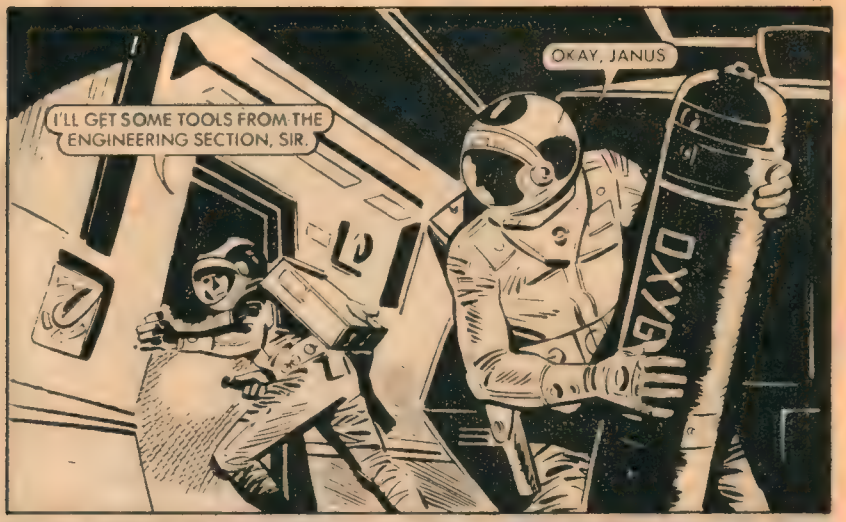
HOW DO WE LAUNCH HER, SIR? THE MINUTE YOU SWITCH ON THE . . .

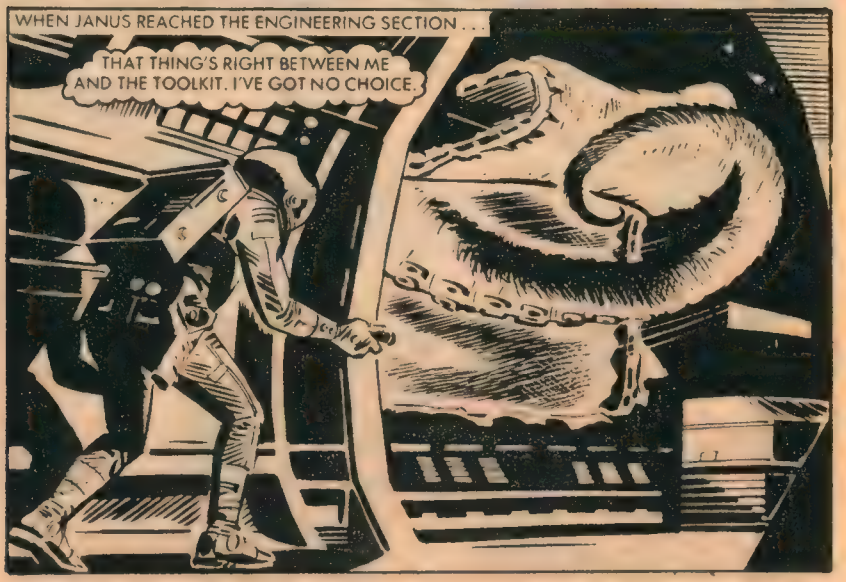
I'VE THOUGHT OF THAT. WE ATTACH THOSE OXYGEN BOTTLES TO THE EMERGENCY CRAFT. WHEN WE TURN THEM ON IT SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO PUSH HER AWAY FROM CAM-X5.

OXYGEN 37

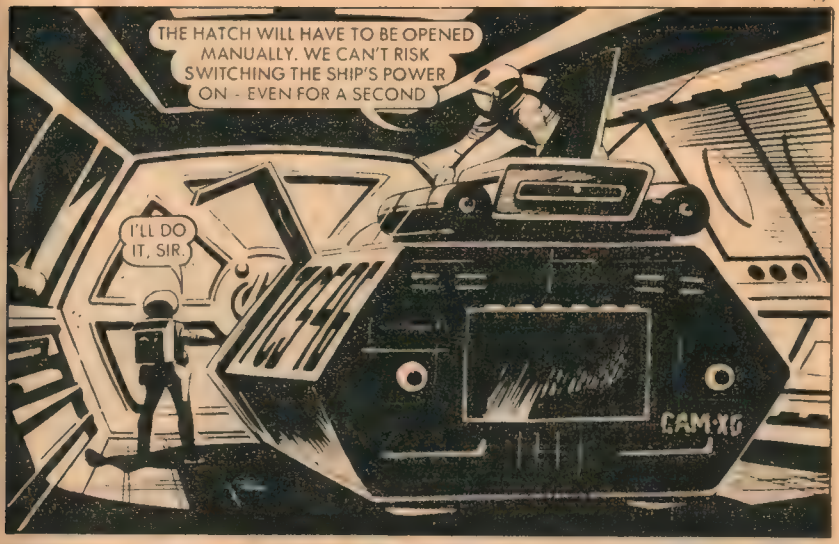
OXYGEN 38

OXYGEN


I'LL GET SOME TOOLS FROM THE ENGINEERING SECTION, SIR.
OKAY, JANUS
OXYGEN


WHEN JANUS REACHED THE ENGINEERING SECTION . . .
THAT THING'S RIGHT BETWEEN ME AND THE TOOLKIT. I'VE GOT NO CHOICE.

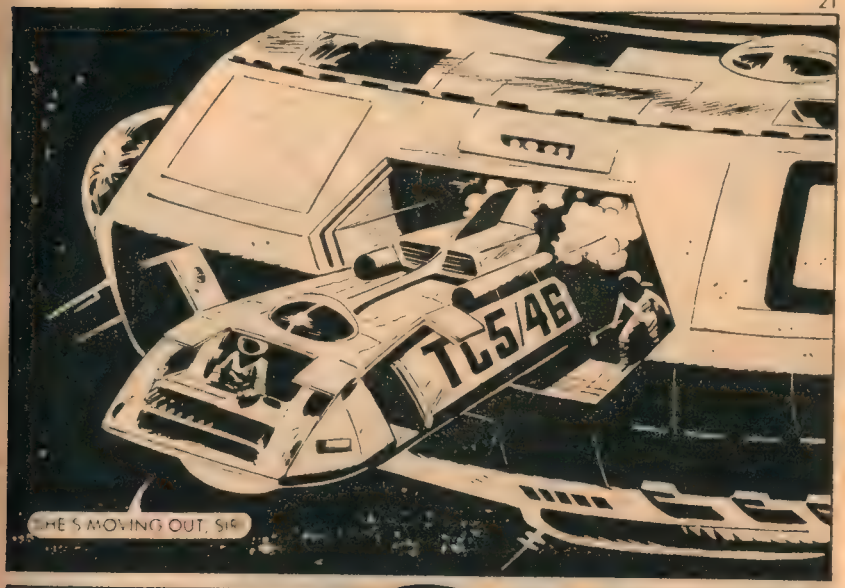
JANUS EDGED ALONG THE WALL TO REACH THE TOOLBOX, A TENTACLE-LIKE THING ONLY INCHES FROM HIS SPACE SUIT.
I JUST HOPE I GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THAT CREATURE SENSES I'M AROUND.
IT TOOK JANUS A LONG TIME, BUT HE MADE IT BACK.
IT MUST HAVE BEEN AFTER THE MAIN POWER CABLES IN THE ENGINEERING SECTION.
46

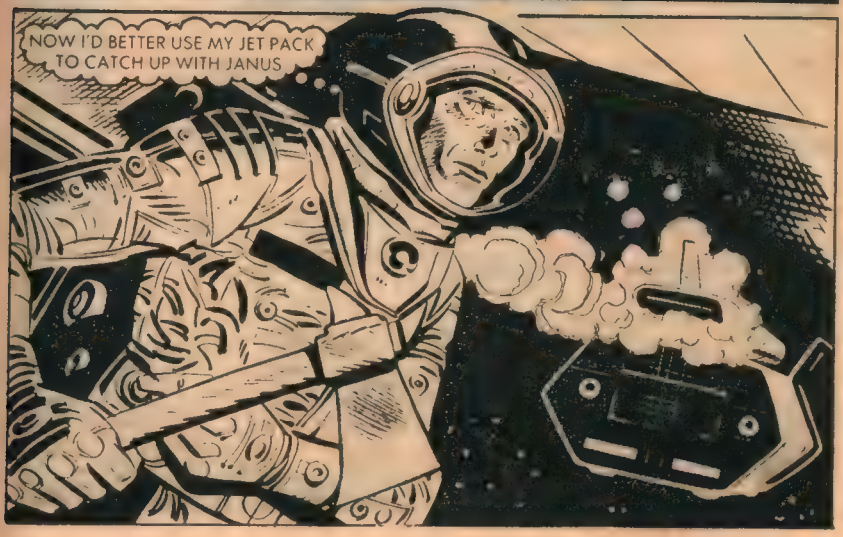

THE HATCH WILL HAVE TO BE OPENED MANUALLY. WE CAN'T RISK SWITCHING THE SHIP'S POWER ON - EVEN FOR A SECOND
I'LL DO IT, SIR.
CAM-X6

NO, JANUS. THE CAPTAIN IS ALWAYS THE LAST TO LEAVE HIS SHIP. NOW, GET INSIDE AND KEEP YOUR FINGERS CROSSED.

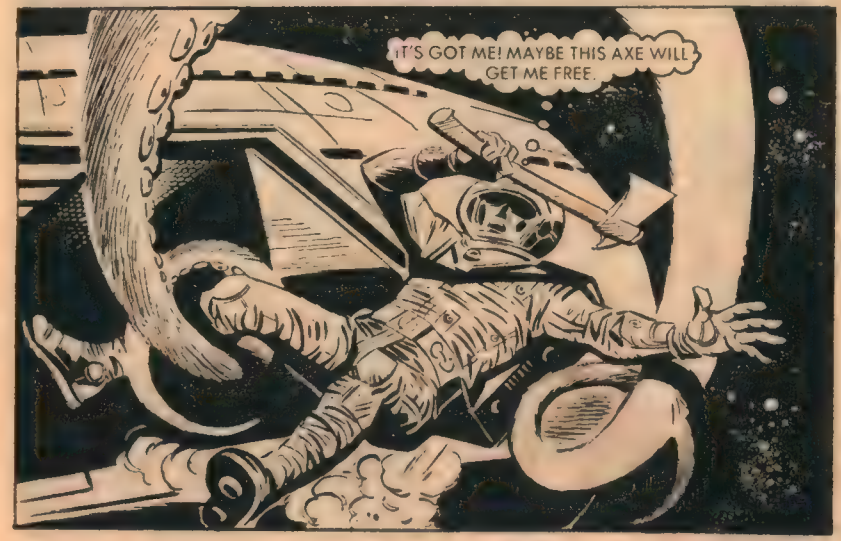
BUT WHEN THE HATCH WAS OPENED . . .
A WEB OF SORTS! IT'S GOT US NICELY WRAPPED UP!
CAM

LASERS WERE NO USE THAT FIRE AXE MIGHT JUST BE WHAT I NEED!
5/46
OKAY, JANUS. I'M OPENING UP THE CYLINDERS IF OUR LUCK HOLDS, WE'LL SOON BE OUT OF THIS MESS


TC5/46
HE'S MOVING OUT, SIR

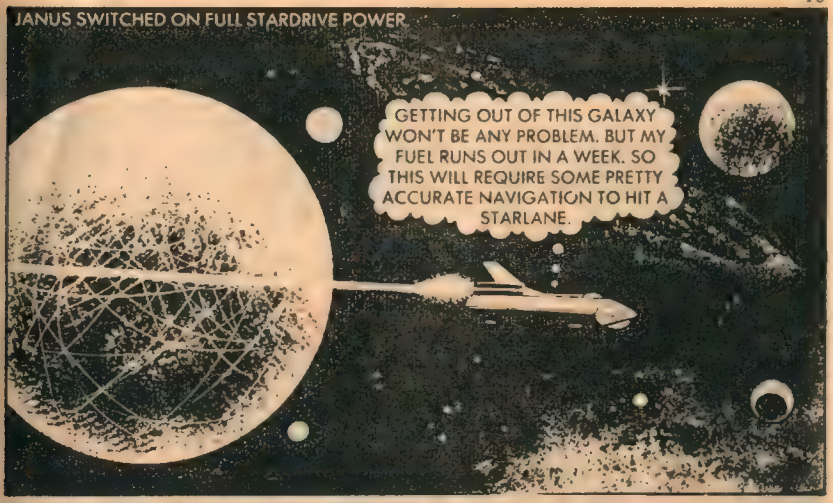

NOW I'D BETTER USE MY JET PACK TO CATCH UP WITH JANUS

LOOK OUT! THAT THINGS'S RIGHT OVER THE HATCH!


IT'S GOT ME! MAYBE THIS AXE WILL GET ME FREE.

IT'S WORKED! IT'S MORE EFFECTIVE THAN THE LATEST LASER PISTOL!
BUT AS FAST AS THE CAPTAIN CUT THE TENTACLES, MORE GRASPED HIM. HE TIRED RAPIDLY.
ALL JANUS COULD DO WAS WATCH.
I CAN'T TURN THIS THING ROUND WITHOUT USING THE POWER—THAT THING WOULD TURN ON OUR ONLY HOPE OF ESCAPE!

JANUS LISTENED TO THE CAPTAIN'S LAST MESSAGE—
SAVE . . . YOURSELF, JANUS! GET OUT OF HERE AND . . . AND WARN THE CONFEDERATION! THIS THING'S GOT TO BE—
I WON'T REST UNTIL I'VE AVENGED YOU ALL
TC5 46


JANUS SWITCHED ON FULL STARDRIVE POWER.
GETTING OUT OF THIS GALAXY WON'T BE ANY PROBLEM. BUT MY FUEL RUNS OUT IN A WEEK. SO THIS WILL REQUIRE SOME PRETTY ACCURATE NAVIGATION TO HIT A STARLANE.

JANUS SET A COURSE WHICH WOULD TAKE HIM TO THE NEAREST STARLANE . . . AND SAT BACK TO WAIT.
THE SOLAR ENERGY PACK WILL KEEP MY OXYGEN REPLACEMENT UNIT WORKING FOR YEARS. BUT IT'S A QUESTION OF BEING PICKED UP BEFORE MY FOOD AND WATER RUN OUT.
H_2O
WATER

A MONTH LATER, ABOARD AN OLD CLASS B STARFREIGHTER . . .
SENSORS HAVE PICKED UP A CONTACT, CAPTAIN. IT'S TOO SMALL FOR A REGULAR SHIP, AND IT'S TRANSMITTING THE GALACTIC EMERGENCY SIGNAL.
IT HAS TO BE A LIFEBOAT. LET'S HAVE SOME MAGNIFICATION AND SEE WHAT WE'VE GOT.
SET A COURSE FOR DOCKING, MISTER REYNOLDS.
AYE, AYE, SIR!
TC5 46

KALECK, THE FIRST MATE WENT INTO THE LIFEBOAT ONCE IT HAD DOCKED.
HE'S HALF DEAD, CAPTAIN
THEN WHAT ARE YOU STANDING AROUND FOR? GET HIM TO SICK BAY!
JANUS RECOVERED SOME TIME LATER.
WHOEVER YOU ARE, YOU'VE GOT TO GET ME TO THE NEAREST CONFEDERATION PLANET.
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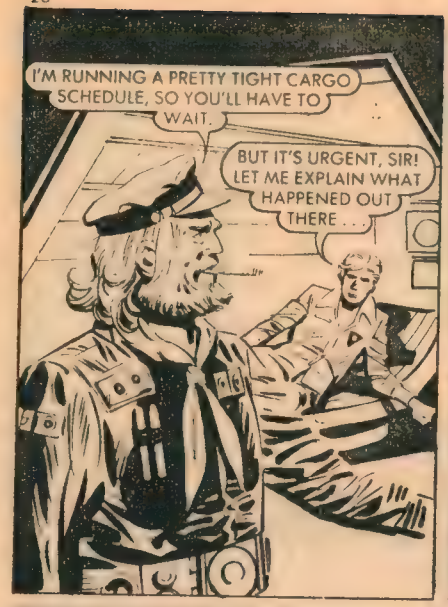
I'M CAPTAIN HARRY MASTERS OF THE LUCY JANE . . . AND YOU'RE GOING NOWHERE UNTIL YOU'RE FIT.

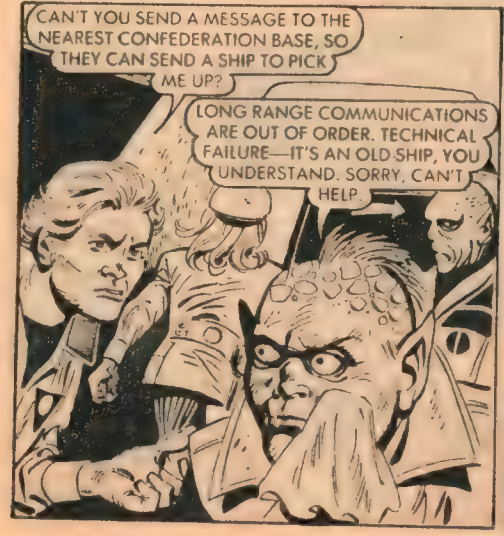

I'M RUNNING A PRETTY TIGHT CARGO SCHEDULE, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT.
BUT IT'S URGENT, SIR! LET ME EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED OUT THERE . . .

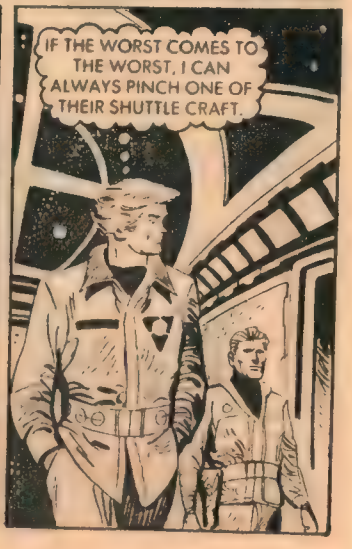
JANUS TOLD HIS TALE
YOU'VE GOT SPACE-MADNESS. DON'T YOU GO SPREADING THIS AROUND MY SHIP— I'VE GOT SOME MIGHTY SUPERSTITIOUS BLOKES ABOARD, AND THEY MIGHT JUST BELIEVE YOU.

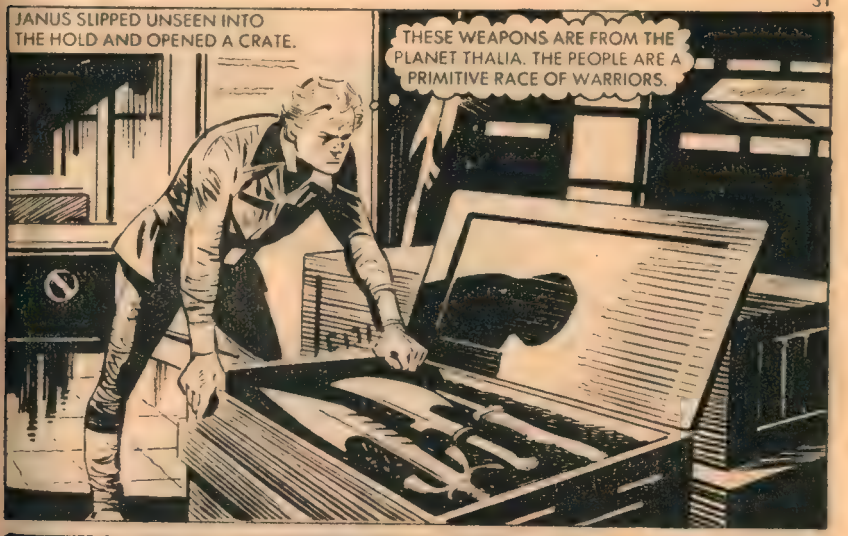
LOOKS LIKE I'LL HAVE TO MAKE MY OWN ARRANGEMENTS TO GET OFF THIS SHIP.
5-1

JANUS WAS SUMMONED FOR A MEAL.
THE CAPTAIN ISN'T TOO FOND OF THE CONFEDERATION.
WHY, SIR? HAVE YOU GOT SOMETHING AGAINST THEM?
YOU MIGHT SAY THAT. I WAS A CAPTAIN IN THE SPACE FORCE. I LOST THIS PUTTING DOWN A REBELLION OF SYGMA-VI. THEY CLASSIFIED ME AS AN INVALID, EVEN WITH THIS BIONIC REPLACEMENT, SO THEY OFFERED ME A DESK JOB.

SEE HOW STRONG IT IS? AND THE IDIOTS INVALIDED ME OUT OF THE FORCE.
OF ALL THE SHIPS TO PICK IT HAD TO BE THIS ONE!


CAN'T YOU SEND A MESSAGE TO THE NEAREST CONFEDERATION BASE, SO THEY CAN SEND A SHIP TO PICK ME UP?
LONG RANGE COMMUNICATIONS ARE OUT OF ORDER. TECHNICAL FAILURE—IT'S AN OLD SHIP, YOU UNDERSTAND. SORRY, CAN'T HELP.


IF THE WORST COMES TO THE WORST, I CAN ALWAYS PINCH ONE OF THEIR SHUTTLE CRAFT.


JANUS SLIPPED UNSEEN INTO THE HOLD AND OPENED A CRATE.
THESE WEAPONS ARE FROM THE PLANET THALIA. THE PEOPLE ARE A PRIMITIVE RACE OF WARRIORS.

THEY'RE MADE OF MALIDIUM, A RARE AND PRECIOUS METAL FORBIDDEN TO BE TAKEN FROM THALIA. NO WONDER THE CAPTAIN SEEMED ANXIOUS ABOUT HIS CARGO. IT'S WORTH MILLIONS OF CREDITS.

DROP THAT SWORD
I HOPE HE DOESN'T THINK I WAS TRYING TO PINCH THIS STUFF.

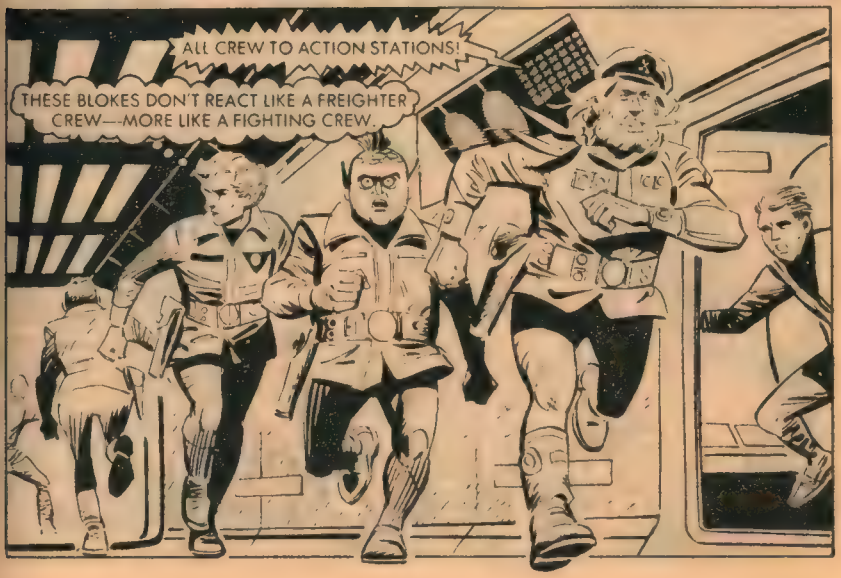
CURIOSITY KILLED THE CAT, AND IT IS CERTAINLY GOING TO KILL YOU

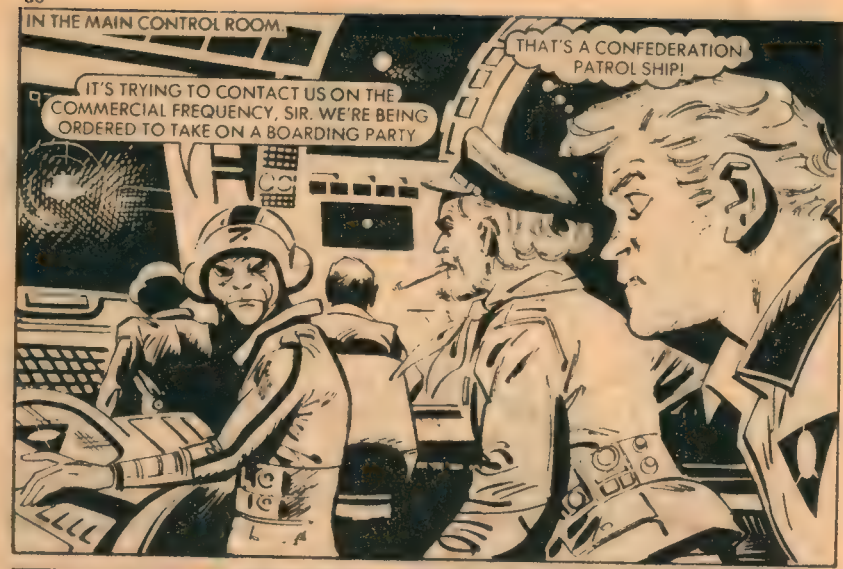
I DON'T LIKE PEOPLE POINTING, ESPECIALLY LASERS.

NOW WE'RE EVEN . . . TAKE THAT!

NOW WE RE EVEN!
WHEN JANUS CAME ROUND HE WAS IN THE CONTROL ROOM.
I'M AFRAID SOME OF MY MEN ARE RATHER KEEN TO PROTECT THAT CARGO. BUT YOU WERE A TRIFLE NAUGHTY TO OPEN A CRATE.
THAT COLECTION OF WEAPONS IS ON ROUTE TO A MUSEUM ON ALTAIR-BETA. YOU'D BETTER MAKE SURE OUR YOUNG FRIEND DOESN T GET INTO ANY MORE TROUBLE, KALECK.
NO FEDERATION ESCORT! A PRECIOUS CARGO! A GUN-HAPPY CREW! SOMETHING DOESN'T ADD UP.

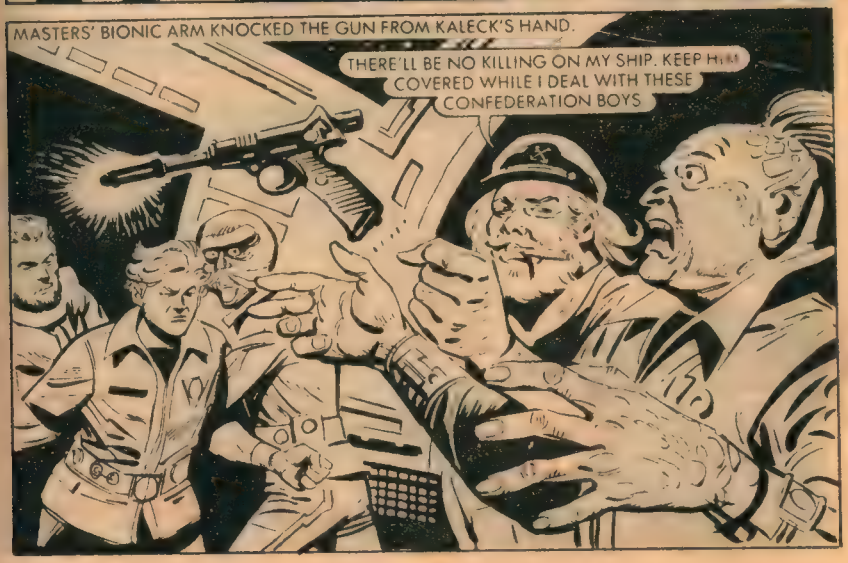
WE'VE PICKED UP A RED CONTACT. IT'S CLOSING FAST!
LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO GET SOME ACTION


ALL CREW TO ACTION STATIONS!
THESE BLOKES DON'T REACT LIKE A FREIGHTER CREW—MORE LIKE A FIGHTING CREW.

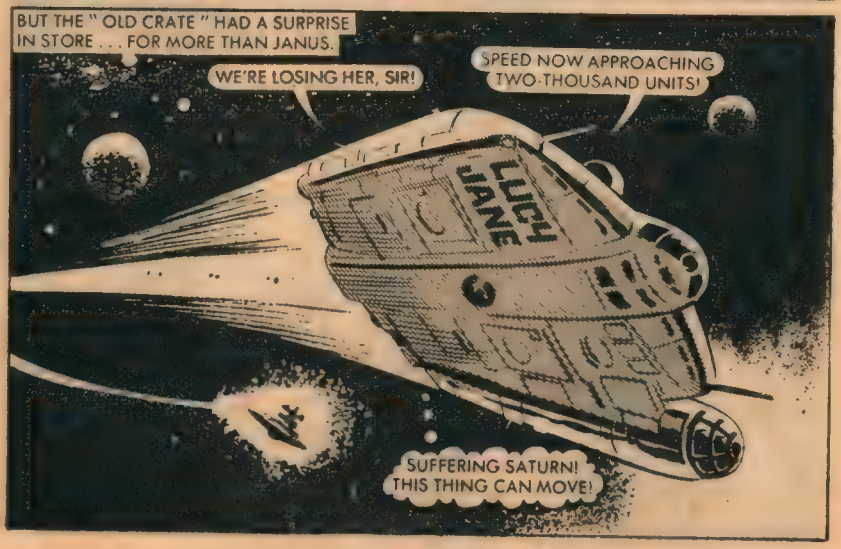

IN THE MAIN CONTROL ROOM.
IT'S TRYING TO CONTACT US ON THE COMMERCIAL FREQUENCY, SIR. WE'RE BEING ORDERED TO TAKE ON A BOARDING PARTY
THAT'S A CONFEDERATION PATROL SHIP!

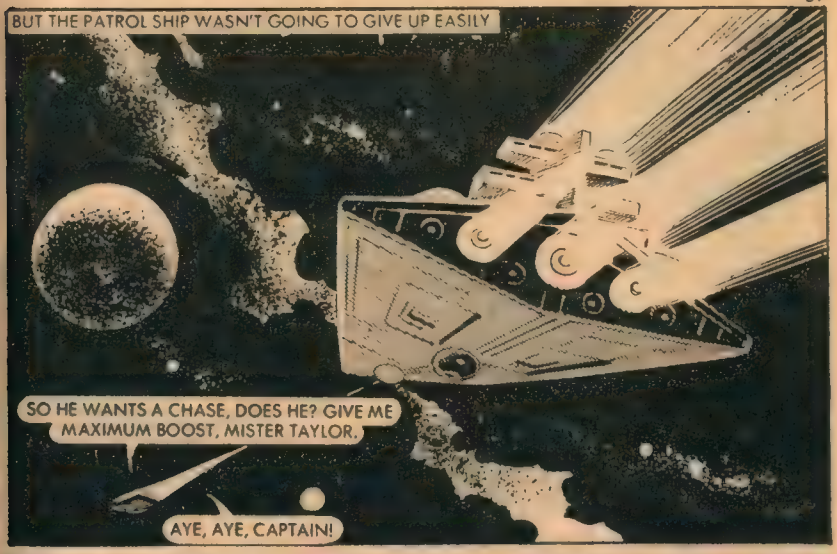
AT THIS RANGE WE CAN BLAST HER INTO SPACE DUST!
BUT WE WON'T! TAKE EVASIVE ACTION AND PUT UP THE DEFLECTOR SHIELDS
78351
AZVH

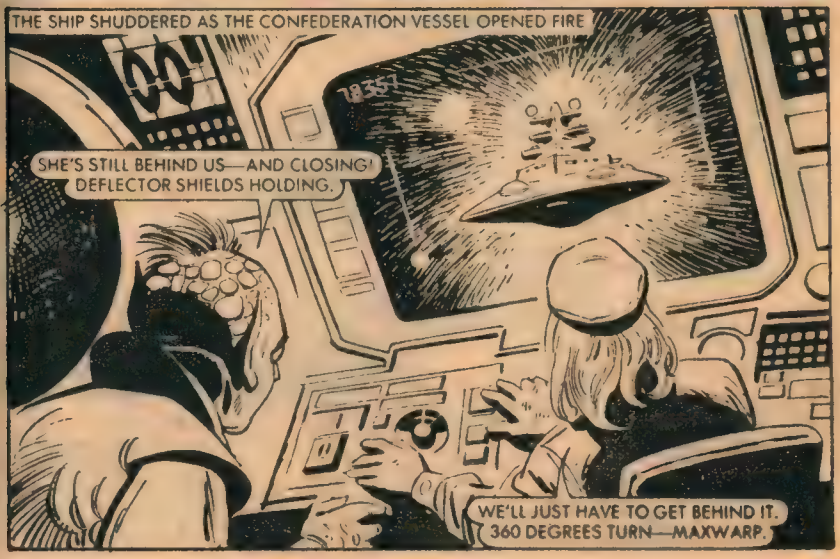
YOU'RE A BUNCH OF PIRATES! I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED!
I'M GOING TO BURN THAT SNIVELLING COP ONCE AND FOR ALL.


MASTERS' BIONIC ARM KNOCKED THE GUN FROM KALECK'S HAND.
THERE'LL BE NO KILLING ON MY SHIP. KEEP HIM COVERED WHILE I DEAL WITH THESE CONFEDERATION BOYS

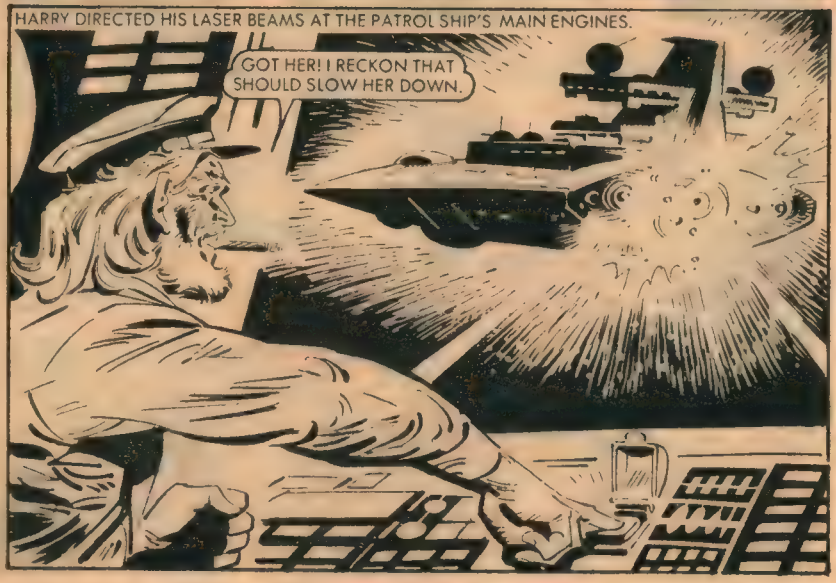
THEY'VE FIRED A WARNING SHOT
RIGHT! GIVE ME FULL POWER ON MAIN STARDRIVE BOOST.
THEY'LL NEVER OUTRUN THAT PATROL SHIP IN THIS OLD CRATE!


BUT THE " OLD CRATE " HAD A SURPRISE IN STORE . . . FOR MORE THAN JANUS.
WE'RE LOSING HER, SIR!
SPEED NOW APPROACHING TWO-THOUSAND UNITS!
LUCY JANE
SUFFERING SATURN! THIS THING CAN MOVE!


BUT THE PATROL SHIP WASN'T GOING TO GIVE UP EASILY
SO HE WANTS A CHASE, DOES HE? GIVE ME MAXIMUM BOOST, MISTER TAYLOR.
AYE, AYE, CAPTAIN!


THE SHIP SHUDDERED AS THE CONFEDERATION VESSEL OPENED FIRE
SHE'S STILL BEHIND US—AND CLOSING! DEFLECTOR SHIELDS HOLDING.
WE'LL JUST HAVE TO GET BEHIND IT. 360 DEGREES TURN—MAXWARP.

NICELY DONE. NOW JUST A LITTLE MORE.
LUCY JANE


HARRY DIRECTED HIS LASER BEAMS AT THE PATROL SHIP'S MAIN ENGINES.
GOT HER! I RECKON THAT SHOULD SLOW HER DOWN.

YOU MURDERING SWINE!
EASY, KID! I'VE ONLY CRIPPLED HER. SHE'LL BE ABLE TO LIMP BACK TO THE NEAREST BASE ON SECONDARY POWER

I SAY WE KILL HIM. HE CAN IDENTIFY US NOW.
I DON'T HOLD WITH MURDER! WE'LL DUMP HIM ON ONE OF THOSE SETTLEMENTS IN SYGMA-V.

YOU'RE GOING SOFT, HARRY. THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE LET SOME SNIVELLING CONFEDERATION MAN LIVE
IS THAT SO?

EXCUSE ME, KID. IT LOOKS LIKE I'M GOING TO HAVE TO ASSERT MY AUTHORITY!
THEY MIGHT JUST DECIDE THAT YOU'RE EXPENDABLE AS WELL!

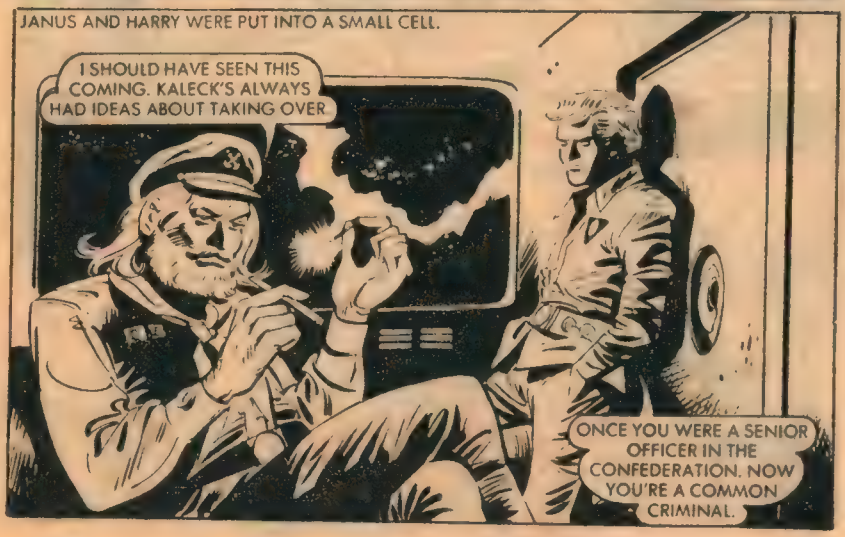
MASTERS STRUCK OUT.
MUTINY, EH? IN THE DAYS OF OLD YOU'D ALL HAVE BEEN STRUNG UP ON THE YARDARM!

I WOULDN'T TRY ANYTHING. THESE THINGS MAKE QUITE A MESS AT CLOSE RANGE.
I DON'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE, DO I?

WOULD ANYONE ELSE LIKE TO TRY?

KALECK RAISED A THERMAL BLASTER.
A GOOD TRY, BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE KILLED ME BECAUSE I AM GOING TO KILL YOU BOTH.

TAKE THEM AWAY. WE WILL AMUSE OURSELVES LATER.
NOW WE'RE IN THE SAME BOAT.
-742


JANUS AND HARRY WERE PUT INTO A SMALL CELL.
I SHOULD HAVE SEEN THIS COMING. KALECK'S ALWAYS HAD IDEAS ABOUT TAKING OVER
ONCE YOU WERE A SENIOR OFFICER IN THE CONFEDERATION. NOW YOU'RE A COMMON CRIMINAL.

IT'S A LONG STORY, KID. AFTER I WAS FORCED TO LEAVE THE CONFEDERATION I DRIFTED AROUND FROM JOB TO JOB. THEN I RAN INTO KALECK AND HIS CREW.

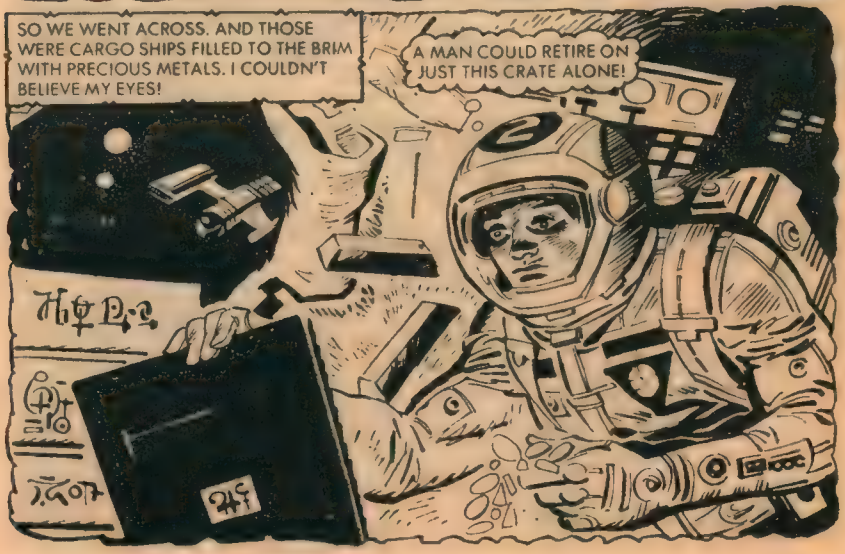
KALECK WAS LOOKING FOR A MAN WHO KNEW HOW TO HANDLE SPACE VEHICLES—AND WHO BETTER THAN AN EX-COMMANDER IN THE SPACE CORPS

KALECK WAS ENJOYING HIS SUDDEN RISE TO COMMAND.
FETCH THE LIEUTENANT. AS FOR MASTERS, WE WILL NEED HIM ALIVE FOR THE TIME BEING.

YOU'RE ABOUT TO LEAVE US, MY YOUNG FRIEND.
THEN YOU'RE A BIGGER FOOL THAN I TOOK YOU FOR. I HAVE SOMETHING THAT MIGHT INTEREST YOU.

TALK AND I WILL DECIDE!
THE STUFF YOU'VE GOT ON BOARD HERE IS CHICKENFEED COMPARED TO THE TREASURE I'VE FOUND.

WE WERE ON A RECONNAISSANCE MISSION IN AN UNCHARTED GALAXY, WHEN WE CAME ACROSS A HUGE ALIEN FLEET . . .
BIO-SENSORS INDICATE NO LIFE SIGNS ABOARD ANY OF THOSE SHIPS, SIR.

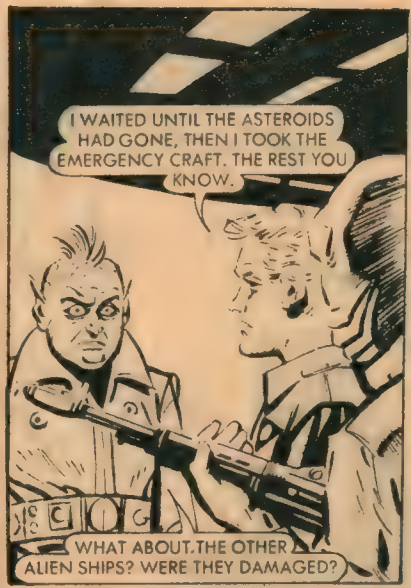

SO WE WENT ACROSS. AND THOSE WERE CARGO SHIPS FILLED TO THE BRIM WITH PRECIOUS METALS. I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EYES!
A MAN COULD RETIRE ON JUST THIS CRATE ALONE!

ON THE FLIGHT DECK WE DISCOVERED WHAT HAD HAPPENED—A VIRUS PICKED UP FROM A STRANGE PLANET, HAD WIPED OUT EVERY LIVING THING!
HADN'T WE BETTER GET OUT OF HERE, SIR?
DON'T WORRY, JANUS. WE'RE QUITE SAFE IN OUR SPACE SUITS.

AS WE PREPARED TO TRANSFER CARGOES A LARGE ASTEROID STORM HIT US.
COME ON! WE'D BETTER GET A MOVE ON.

IT TOOK US LONGER THAN EXPECTED TO GET BACK TO THE SHIP. AND WHEN WE ARRIVED THE SITUATION WAS CRITICAL.
GIVE ME FULL BOOST, MISTER BISHOP!
RIGHT, SKIPPER.
BUT THE STORM CAUGHT US
MALFUNCTION ON MAIN DRIVE, SKIPPER! WE'RE LOSING SPEED.
CAM-X5
HEAD FOR ONE OF THOSE ALIEN SHIPS, WE'LL TRY TO SHELTER BEHIND IT!

BUT IT WAS TOO LATE.
LOOK OUT!
I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!
EMERGENCY CRAFT LAUNCH PAD



USING THE INFORMATION STORED IN THE EMERGENCY CRAFT, JANUS AND HARRY WERE ABLE TO PLOT A COURSE BACK TO THE STRANGE GALAXY.

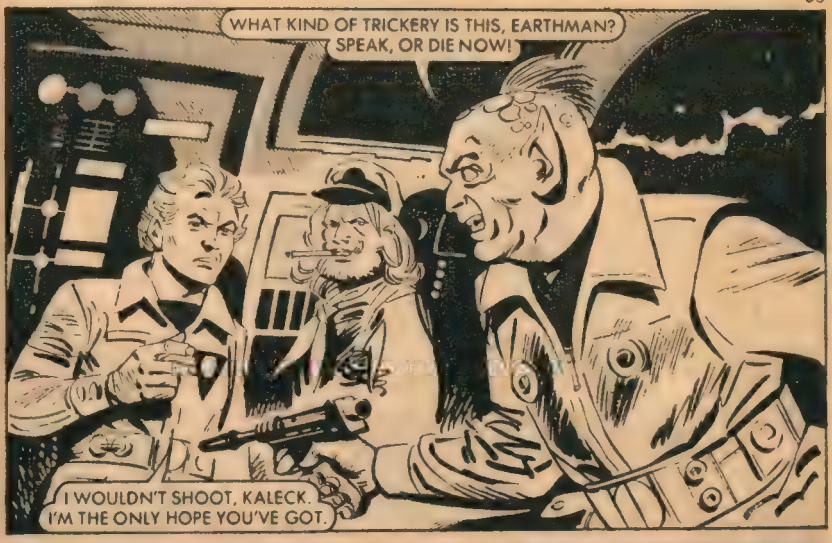
HARRY'S NAVIGATION WAS SPOT ON.
THERE THEY ARE, KALECK. DRIFTING RIGHT TOWARDS US!
SOON WE WILL ALL BE RICH BEYOND OUR WILDEST DREAMS!
I SEE THE WEB, KID. MAYBE YOU ARE TELLING THE TRUTH. HOW DO WE FIGHT THIS THING.
50
I DON'T KNOW

THEY ALL SEEM TO BE CONNECTED TOGETHER BY ROPES. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT!
= CAM

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? THERE'S SOMETHING FUNNY ABOUT THIS.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, KALECK. ARE YOU GETTING COLD FEET? PERHAPS I OUGHT TO TAKE OVER COMMAND AGAIN.

WE WILL GET IN CLOSER AND INVESTIGATE. START DOCKING PROCEDURE!
YES, SIR.

AS THEY CAME WITHIN A FEW FEET OF ONE OF THE ALIEN SHIPS...
LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING!
BY THE HORNS OF KALGA. WHAT ARE THEY?!!!
THE PEOPLE ON MY PLANET TALK ABOUT A GIANT SPIDER CALLED ARCON.


WHAT KIND OF TRICKERY IS THIS, EARTHMAN? SPEAK, OR DIE NOW!
I WOULDN'T SHOOT, KALECK. I'M THE ONLY HOPE YOU'VE GOT.

FIRST, GET YOUR SUITS ON. THEN CUT THE POWER. AFTER THAT YOU'LL ALL FOLLOW ME.
DO AS HE SAYS.

JANUS HANDED OUT THE WEAPONS FROM THE CARGO.
THIS IS MADNESS! HOW CAN WE FIGHT A CREATURE LIKE THAT WITH THESE PRIMITIVE WEAPONS?
THE CREATURE IS ATTRACTED BY POWER SOURCES. IT CONSUMES THE POWER! SO WITH THESE WE HAVE A CHANCE.

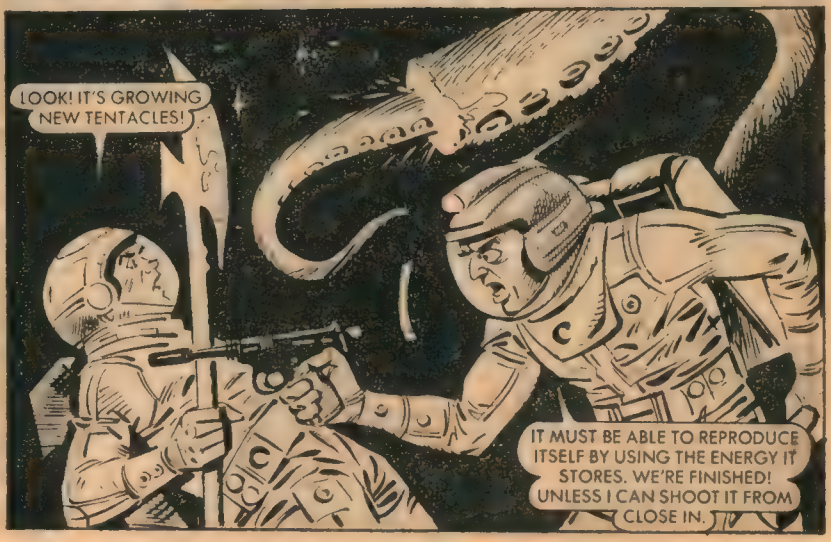
THE SPACERS JETTED OUT TO DEAL WITH ARCON.
DON'T WORRY, JANUS. WITH MY BIONIC ARM AND THIS, WE'LL SOON CUT THAT ARCON DOWN TO SIZE!
I HOPE SO.

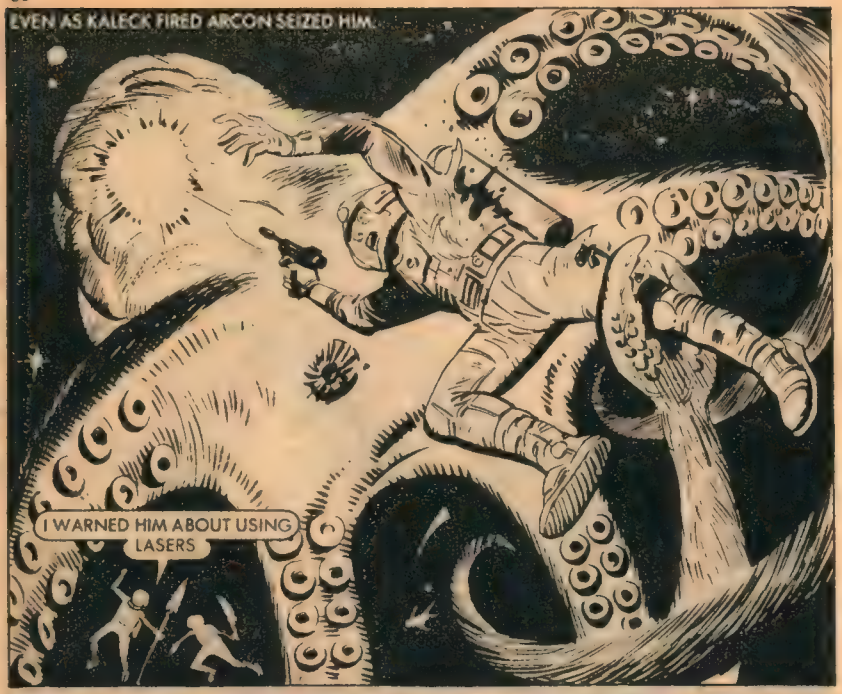
THERE IT IS!
BY THE JUMPING JETFISH OF ZOMA. IT'S ENORMOUS!
350

WATCH OUT FOR THOSE TENTACLES. THEY CAN CRUSH A BATTLECRUISER!

HARRY STRUCK THE FIRST BLOW WITH ALL THE MIGHT OF HIS BIONIC ARM!
HOW'S THIS FOR STARTERS?
AXES SWUNG, AND SWORDS HACKED BUT STI
ARCON KEPT COMING.

IT'S UP TO US NOW— THE REST ARE DEAD.
YES! BUT WE'VE WEAKENED IT.

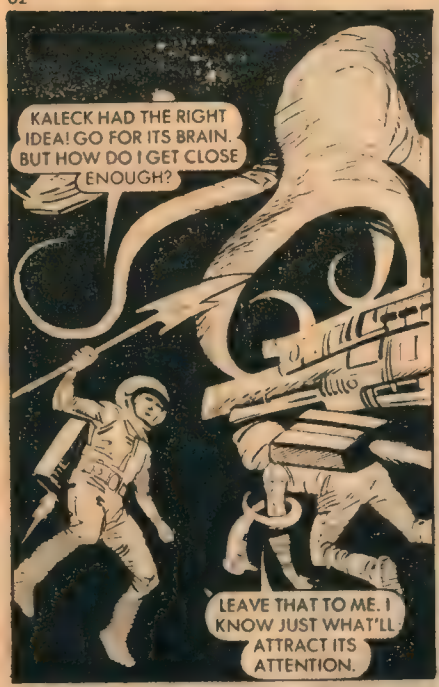

LOOK! IT'S GROWING NEW TENTACLES!
IT MUST BE ABLE TO REPRODUCE ITSELF BY USING THE ENERGY IT STORES. WE'RE FINISHED! UNLESS I CAN SHOOT IT FROM CLOSE IN.


EVEN AS KALECK FIRED ARCON SEIZED HIM.
I WARNED HIM ABOUT USING LASERS

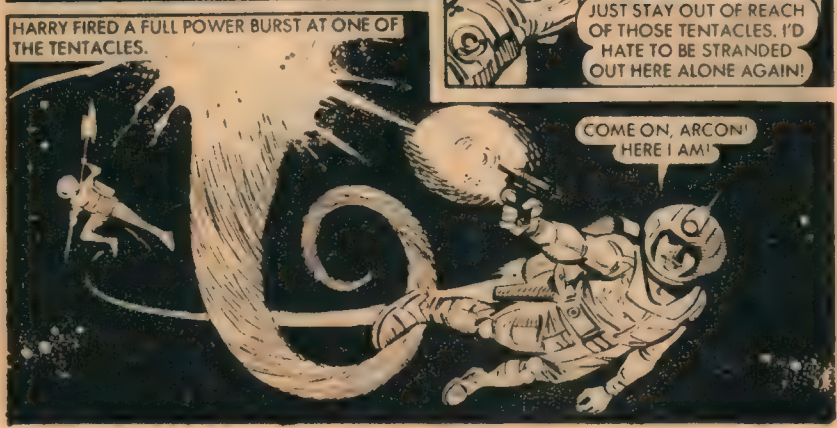
WITH RENEWED ENERGY ARCON LASHED OUT. HARRY'S BIONIC ARM TOOK THE FULL BRUNT OF THE BLOW!
PULL BACK! WE'LL HAVE TO THINK OF SOMETHING. AT THE RATE THOSE TENTACLES ARE GROWING, WE HAVEN'T GOT MUCH TIME!
BY THE JAWS OF HELL! THAT SHOOK MY BACK TEETH UP!

MY ARM! IT'S DRAINED THE POWER.
HANG ON, I'M COMING!

FOR A MOMENT THERE I THOUGHT MY SPACE CAREER WAS GOING TO BE PERMANENTLY ABORTED!
THAT COULD STILL HAPPEN!


KALECK HAD THE RIGHT IDEA! GO FOR ITS BRAIN. BUT HOW DO I GET CLOSE ENOUGH?
LEAVE THAT TO ME. I KNOW JUST WHAT'LL ATTRACT ITS ATTENTION.

IT HAS AN APPETITE FOR LASER ENERGY. WHILE I FEED IT, YOU GET BUSY WITH THAT SPEAR.
JUST STAY OUT OF REACH OF THOSE TENTACLES. I'D HATE TO BE STRANDED OUT HERE ALONE AGAIN!


HARRY FIRED A FULL POWER BURST AT ONE OF THE TENTACLES.
COME ON, ARCON! HERE I AM!

ARCON TURNED ITS ATTENTION TO HARRY.
IT'S WORKING! THERE'S MY OPENING AHEAD.
IT HASN'T DETECTED ME YET!

IT'S GOT TO WORK! IT'S JUST GOT TO!
WITH A SEARING FLASH, ARCON EXPLODED.
WHAT THE . . . UGH!

JANUS WAS HURLED MILES AWAY BY THE EXPLOSION.
WHAT . . . WHAT HAPPENED? IS IT DEAD?
YES! IT JUST DISINTEGRATED!

HARRY AND JANUS BOARDED THE LUCY JANE.
THERE'S PLENTY OF FOOD LEFT. AT LEAST I WON'T STARVE THIS TIME. BUT WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW, HARRY?
AS SOON AS WE GET PICKED UP, I'LL GIVE MYSELF UP TO THE CONFEDERATION.

A YOUNG CONFEDERATION LIEUTENANT AND AN OLDER EMBITTERED CAPTAIN HAD BEATEN THE ODDS. AS THEY HEADED BACK TO CIVILISATION THEY BOTH THOUGHT OF THE YEARS AHEAD. LIEUTENANT JANUS STARTING HIS POLICE CAREER, AND EX-CAPTAIN MASTERS STARTING A NEW LIFE IN THE INFINITE DEPTHS OF SPACE.

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STARBLAZERS IN THE CONQUEST OF SPACE (12)

The Americans first explored our nearest planetary neighbour, Venus, in December 1962. Mariner 2, seen here being tested, indicated the surface of Venus could have a temperature of 600 deg. F. The probe flew past Venus and entered orbit around the Sun.